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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION; US EXPECTATIONS OVER ARGENTINE PRESIDENTIAL  
ELECTIONS; DARFUR; ZOELICK HEAD OF THE WORLD BANK; 06/26/07

#### 1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Today's key international opinion stories include the analysis by US commentators of Mauricio Macri's victory in the Buenos Aires mayoral race; the outcome of the Paris Conference on Darfur; and the confirmation of Robert Zoellick as head of the World Bank.

#### 2. OPINION PIECES AND EDITORIALS

- "US expectations over Kirchner's retreat"

Hugo Alconada Mon, Washington-based correspondent for daily-of-record "La Nacion," comments (06/26) "Mauricio Macri's election victory was received with interest in the circles in this city that follow Latin American issues. They wonder now whether President Nestor Kirchner's retreat could alter the government's plans for October (elections) - not the government's eventual triumph but who will run as a candidate for the official party.

"This (referring to Macri's victory) is very positive. Now will he or she run as a candidate?," a high-ranking member of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee told 'La Nacion,' in reference to the President's re-election or First Lady and Senator Cristina Fernandez's presidential candidacy.

"In the USG official's view, 'while it is a local election, its implications for October are important. This is why we closely follow it.' The source also wondered whether 'the election was a referendum on the Kirchner administration' and whether it could be understood as a 'victory of Macri over Kirchner' rather than over his competitor Daniel Filmus.

"According to Wall Street Eurasia Group political analysis consulting company, the response is 'no.' Analyst Daniel Kerner told 'La Nacion' 'it would be risky to exaggerate the importance of this election'... 'It has clearly been a local election.'

"... For its part, the Department of State kept silent, just as it did following the 17 presidential elections held during the last 18 months all over Latin America. It will do the same during the rest of the year when elections are held in Guatemala, Argentina, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago.

"... Analysts from the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, a progressive think tank in this city, included Kirchner among the 'populist' leaders in the region along with Lula, Evo Morales, Hugo Chavez and Rafael Correa, among others. They convey a positive quality to the term."

- "A bleeding wound with no solution at hand"

Oscar Raul Cardoso, international analyst of leading "Clarín," opines (06/26) "The continuing massacre in Sudan is today the toughest argument to be faced by those who maintain that a harmonious and peaceful co-existence between Islam and the West is possible..."

"There have been more than 200,000 dead in Sudan since 2003 and some 2,500,000 refugees, and those to be held responsible for it are nomad militias who invoke the Koran, the 'janjaweed', who operate in Darfour in favor of the interests of the Khartoum-based ruling dictatorship..."

"The 36 million Sudanese are still worse off than Iraqis, Afghans and Palestinians... Just a few in the international community seem to give a damn about their fate."

"French President Nicholas Sarkozy says to have turned the Sudanese tragedy into one of his main foreign priorities and yesterday's conference is likely to have increased the prestige the French president gained following the recent EU summit held in Germany..."

"Nonetheless, Sudanese will have very little to be grateful about. Sudan's oil still has a stronger voice than the outcry of victims."

"There has not even been any direct, outright criticism of President Omar Al-Bashir's regime and much less, an attempt to impose sanctions. China appears as the huge international protector of the Sudanese regime."

"... The only positive outcome of the Paris conference was France's commitment to increasing its financial aid by some 13 billion dollars while the EU is assessing whether to assist with 40 billion dollars, half of it for peacekeeping forces and half of it for humanitarian aid. None of this will be enough. The question is how long the massacre will last and how long the international community will continue to ignore it."

- "Robert Zoellick is a long-distance runner with political ability"

Business-financial "BAE" (06/26) reports "Robert Zoellick, who was confirmed yesterday as the new head of the World Bank, is a long-distance runner that is used to marathon negotiations and to moving swiftly along the corridors of power. Yesterday, the World Bank's Executive Council announced that it has agreed to Zoellick's nomination, which was proposed by the White House May 30."

"... His critics say that he lacks personal charm, that he has some tendency to intrigue and that, while he is pragmatic, he has done the utmost all through his life to defend the US hegemonic position in the world."

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